**The Shurangama Sutra**

**VOLUME 6**

**CHAPTER 2**

**Establishing the Bodhimanda**

G2 At second request he explains in detail.
H1 At second request he describes the bodhimanda.
I1 Ananda asks again.
 **Sutra:

Ananda said to the Buddha, "World Honored One, enveloped in the Thus Come One's unsurpassed, compassionate instruction, my mind has already become enlightened, and I know how to cultivate and be certified to the path beyond learning. But for those who cultivate in the final age and want to establish a bodhimanda: how do they secure the boundaries in accord with the rules of purity of the Buddha, the World Honored One?"

Commentary:**

After Ananda heard what the Buddha had said, he thought to ask about how to secure the boundaries and establish the bodhimanda. Ananda said to the Buddha, "World Honored One, enveloped in the Thus Come One's unsurpassed, compassionate instruction, my mind has already become enlightened, and I know how to cultivate and be certified to the path beyond learning. I can accomplish the karma in the path of fourth-stage arhatship and beyond. I am capable of this, but for those who cultivate in the final age and want to establish a bodhimanda: how do they secure the boundaries in accord with the rules of purity of the Buddha, the World Honored One? In the future, in the Dharma-ending Age, there will be people who want to set up this kind of bodhimanda. How do they secure the boundaries? How do they accord with your pure rules in doing it, Buddha?"

I2 The world honored one answers again.
J1 Establishing the bodhimanda.
K1 The platform.
 **Sutra:

The Buddha said to Ananda, "If there are people in the Dharma-ending Age who wish to establish a bodhimanda, they should first find a powerful white ox in snowy mountains, one which eats the lush and fertile sweet-smelling grasses of the mountain. Since such an ox also drinks only the pure water of the snowy mountains, its excrement will be very fine. They can take that excrement, mix it with chandana, and plaster the ground with it.

Commentary:**

Shakyamuni Buddha, having heard Ananda ask about the method for securing the boundaries in accord with the Buddha's rules, said to Ananda, "If there are people in the Dharma ending Age who wish to establish a bodhimanda, they should first find a powerful white ox in snowy mountains, one which eats the lush and fertile sweet-smelling grasses of the mountain. Since such an ox also drinks only the pure water of the snowy mountains, its excrement will be very fine. They can take that excrement, mix it with chandana, and plaster the ground with it." The grasses eaten by the ox are fragrant and so its excrement can be mixed with powdered chandana incense for smearing on the ground.
 **Sutra:

If it is not in the snowy mountains, the ox's excrement will stink and cannot be used to smear on the ground. In that case, select a level place, dig down five feet or so, and use that yellow earth.

Commentary:**

If it is not in the snowy mountains, the ox's excrement will stink. If the ox does not reside in snowy mountains, it will smell bad and be impure and so its excrement cannot be used to smear on the ground. In that case, select a level place, dig down five feet or so, and use that yellow earth. In that case, you should select a flat place, dig down about five feet, and take the yellow earth at that level.
 **Sutra:

Mix it with chandana incense, sinking-in water incense, jasmine incense, continuously permeating incense, burnished gold incense, white paste incense, green wood incense, fragrant mound incense, sweet pine incense, and chicken-tongue incense. Grind these ten ingredients to a fine powder, make a paste, and smear it on the ground of the platform. The area should be sixteen feet wide and octagonal in shape.

Commentary:**

Mix it with chandana incense, sinking-in-water incense (agaru), jasmine incense (sumana), continuously permeating incense, burnished gold incense (kunkuma), white paste incense, green wood incense, fragrant mound incense (kunduruka), sweet pine incense, and chicken-tongue incense. You mix the yellow earth with these ten kinds of incense. Grind these ten ingredients to a fine powder, make a paste, and smear it on the ground of the platform. The area should be sixteen feet wide and octagonal in shape.

K2 The adornments.
 **Sutra:

In the center of the platform, place a lotus flower made of gold, silver, copper, or wood. In the middle of the flower set a bowl in which dew that has collected in the eighth lunar month has been poured. Let an abundance of flower petals float on the water. Arrange eight circular mirrors in each direction around the flower and the bowl. Outside the mirrors place sixteen lotus flowers and sixteen censers, so that the incense-burners are adorned and arranged between the flowers. Burn only sinking-in- water incense, and do not let the fire be 'seen.'

Commentary:**

In the center of the platform, place a lotus flower made of gold, silver, copper, or wood. In the middle of the flower set a bowl in which dew that has collected in the eighth lunar month has been poured. Let an abundance of flower petals float on the water. Arrange eight circular mirrors in each direction around the flower and the bowl. Prepare eight circular mirrors and set them around the bowl of flowers so that they correspond to the eight directions, since it is an octagonal platform. Outside the mirrors place sixteen lotus flowers and sixteen censers, so that the incense-burners are adorned and arranged between the flowers. The sixteen flowers and the sixteen censers are placed alternately around the platform. The incense-burners should be adorned so they are pleasing to look at. Burn only sinking-inwater incense, and do not let the fire be "seen." In the censers burn this one kind of incense only. "Do not let the fire be 'seen' " means that the mirror and the flowers should not "see" the fire. In other words, the incense should be lit inside the censer such that the flame is not "visible" in the mirrors or to the flowers.

K3 The offerings.
 **Sutra:**

**Place the milk of a white ox in sixteen vessels, along with cakes made with the milk, rock-candy, oil-cakes, porridge, turushka, honeyed ginger, clarified butter, and filtered honey. These sixteen are set around the outside of the sixteen flowers as an offering to the Buddhas and great Bodhisattvas.

Commentary:**

Place the milk of a white ox in sixteen vessels, along with cakes made with the milk. Some of the milk is mixed with flour and made into cakes. Also placed in the vessels are rock-candy, oil-cakes, porridge, a gruel made with milk and rice, turushka incense, honeyed ginger, clarified butter, and filtered honey. These sixteen are set around the outside of the sixteen flowers. Place one of the vessels in front of each flower, so that each has one, making sixteen in all. These are an offering to the Buddhas and great Bodhisattvas.
 **Sutra:

At every mealtime and at midnight, prepare a half-pint of honey and three tenths of a pint of clarified butter. Set up a small incense burner in front of the platform. Decoct the fragrant liquid from the turushka incense and use it to cleanse the coals. Light them so that a blaze bursts forth, and toss the clarified butter and honey into the flaming censer. Let it burn until the smoke disappears, and present it to the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas.

Commentary:**
At every mealtime and at midnight, it should be done during the day at mealtimes and also at midnight, prepare a half-pint of honey and three tenths of a pint of clarified butter. Set up a small incense burner in front of the Platform. This is yet another burner, apart from the ones on the platform. It is placed in front of the platform. Decoct the fragrant liquid from turushka incense and use it to cleanse the coals. All the charcoal used in the burner should first be washed with the fragrant liquid obtained from turushka, a very fragrant incense. Light them so that a blaze bursts forth. Light the burner so that the fire is strong and hot. Toss the clarified butter and honey into the flaming censer. Let it burn until the smoke disappears, and present it to the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas. Take the end-product and offer it to the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas.

There are a lot of things like this in the Secret school. They often burn combinations of honey and butter and offer them to the Buddhas. They burn not only that, but anything else of value, such as gold, jewels, and other valuable materials. They first burn them and then offer them to the Buddhas.
 **Sutra:

About the four outside walls one should suspend flags and flowers, and within the room where the platform is located, one should arrange on the four walls images of the Thus Come Ones and Bodhisattvas of the ten directions.

Commentary:**
About the four outside walls one should suspend flags and flowers. This refers to the four outer walls of the room in which the platform is located. And within the room where the platform is located, one should arrange on the four walls images of the Thus Come Ones and Bodhisattvas of the ten directions.
 **Sutra:

In the most prominent place, display images of Vairocana Buddha, Shakyamuni Buddha, Maitreya Bodhisattva, Akshobhya Buddha, Amitabha Buddha, and all the magnificent transformations of Guan Yin Bodhisattva. To the left and right, place the Vajra-Treasury Bodhisattvas. Beside them display the lords Shakra and Brahma, Ucchushma, and the Blue Dirgha, as well as Kundalin and Bhrukuti and all four heavenly kings, with Vinayaka to the left and right of the door.

Commentary:**

In the most prominent place, display images of Vairocana Buddha, Shakyamuni Buddha, Maitreya Bodhisattva, Akshobhya Buddha, Amitabha Buddha, and all the magnificent transformations of Guan Yin Bodhisattva. Vairocana means "pervading all places." Maitreya Bodhisattva is the next Buddha, the Buddha-to-be. He is the plump Bodhisattva. Akshobhya Buddha is in the east; he is also known as Medicine Master Buddha. Akshobhya means "unmoving." The east is usually associated with movement, but the Buddha of the east is unmoving. Amitabha means "limitless light" and "limitless life." As to the magnificent transformations of Guan Yin Bodhisattva, we have heard about them already in this sutra, in the passage that said the Bodhisattva may have one head, three heads, five heads, seven heads, nine heads, eleven heads, or one hundred and eight heads. It said he may have one hand, three hands, five hands, seven hands, nine hands, as many as one hundred and eight hands, a thousand hands, ten thousand hands, or eighty-four thousand hands.

To the left and right, place the Vajra Treasury Bodhisattvas, the dharma protectors. They have stern countenances, often terrifying to behold. Beside them display the lords Shakra and Brahma. Shakra is the lord of the Heaven of the Thirty-three. He is known as God Almighty, or the Heavenly Lord. Brahma is lord of the Great Brahma Heaven. Also display Ucchushma and the Blue Dirgha as well as Kundalin and Bhrukuti. Ucchushma is "Firehead Vajra." Blue Dirgha has a blue face and is a dharma protector.

Kundalin means "releasing the knots of resentment"; it is another name for a vajra spirit. Bhrukuti is also a dharma protector. Display as well images of all four heavenly kings, with Vinayaka to the left and right of the door. Vinayaka is another dharma protector who is particularly ugly and frightening. The Chinese description is of two beings, dharma protector Pin Na, who has a human body and a boar's head, and dharma protector Ye Jia who has a human body and an elephant's head and a long trunk. The Indian depictions show Vinayaka, identified with the god Ganesha (Ganapati), as one being possessing a human body with an elephant head. Vinayaka also appears as two standing beings with human bodies and elephant heads; the transformation into such bizarre appearances is intentional in order to instill fear in people so they will behave themselves. At the door of the bodhimanda, then, these images are placed on both sides for protection.

K4 The mirrors.
 **Sutra:

Then suspend eight mirrors in the space around the platform so that they are exactly opposite the mirrors on the platform. This will allow the reflections in them to interpenetrate ad infinitum.

Commentary:**

Then suspend eight mirrors in the space around the platform so that they are exactly opposite the mirrors on the platform. "How can they be hung in space?" you wonder. Just as one hangs a lamp from the ceiling. How could one hang them in space alone like the sun? That's not what's meant here. The meaning is to hang them so that they are suspended in the space in the room. The mirrors are placed facing one another. This will allow the reflections in them to interpenetrate ad infinitum. That means that the image in one is caught in the other, and within that the image of the interpenetration is shown, and so on, layer
within layer in never-ending succession.

J2 Stages of cultivation and accomplishment.
K1 First three weeks: initial accomplishment of samadhi and wisdom.
 **Sutra:

During the first seven days, bow sincerely to the Thus Come Ones of the ten directions, to the great Bodhisattvas, and to the names of the Arhats. Throughout the six periods of the day and night, continually recite the mantra as you circumambulate the Platform. Practice the Way with a sincere mind, reciting the mantra one hundred and eight times at a stretch.

Commentary:**

During the first seven days, bow sincerely to the Thus Come Ones of the ten directions, to the great Bodhisattvas, and to the names of the Arhats. Throughout the six periods of the day and night, continually recite the mantra as you circumambulate the Platform. "The mantra" here is the entire Shurangama Mantra. Practice the Way with a sincere mind, reciting the mantra one hundred and eight times at a stretch. "A sincere mind" means that you don't think of anything else; you singlemindedly hold to the mantra. Each time you recite, go through the mantra one hundred and eight times without stopping.
 **Sutra:

During the second week, direct your intent by making the vows of a Bodhisattva. The mind should never be cut off from them. In my vinaya, I have already taught about vows.

Commentary:**

During the second week of practice, direct your intent by making the vows of a Bodhisattva. You must be ever more sincere and concentrated. Make the four vast vows of a Bodhisattva:

1. Living beings are boundless; I vow to save them.
2. Afflictions are endless; I vow to cut them off.
3. Dharma-doors are limitless; I vow to study them completely.
4. The Buddha Way is unsurpassed; I vow to accomplish it The mind should never be cut off from them. This means the mind never stops reciting the Shurangama Mantra, and it never ceases to bring forth the four vast vows. In my vinaya, I have already taught about vows. When I spoke the precepts, I taught the practice of making vows.
 **Sutra:

During the third week, one holds the Buddha's mantra, Bwo Da La, for twelve hours at a time, with a single intent; and on the seventh day, the Thus Come Ones of the ten directions will appear simultaneously. Their light will be mutually reflected in the mirrors and will illumine the entire place; and they will rub one on the crown of one's head.

Commentary:**

During the third week, one holds the Buddha's mantra, Bwo Da La for twelve hours at a time, with a single intent. One holds and recites the mantra "Syi Dan Dwo Bwo Da La", spoken by the Buddha, that is, the Shurangama Mantra. On the seventh day, the Thus Come Ones of the ten directions will appear simultaneously. They will suddenly appear in the bodhimanda all at the same time. Their light will be mutually reflected in the mirrors and will illumine the entire place, and they will rub one on the crown of one's head. You will have the crown of your head rubbed by the Buddhas of the ten directions, and this act will be reflected within the facing mirrors in a bright image which repeats itself ad infinitum.
 **Sutra:

If one cultivates this samadhi in the bodhimanda, then even in the Dharma-ending Age one can study and practice until one's body and mind are as pure and clear as vaidurya.

Commentary:**

If one cultivates this samadhi in the Bodhimanda with a platform as described above, and if the Thus Come Ones of the ten directions appear simultaneously and aid one by rubbing one on the crown of the head, and if in this way one can practice samadhi, cultivating the return of the hearing to hear the self-nature, then even in the Dharma-ending Age one can study and practice until one's body and mind are as pure and clear as vaidurya. One's body and mind will become as transparent as crystal and will shine with light.

K2 After one hundred more days: sudden certification to the sagely fruit.
 **Sutra:

Ananda, if any one of the bhikshu's precept transmitting masters or any one of the other bhikshus practicing with him is not pure, the Bodhimanda as described will not be successful.

Commentary:**
Ananda, if any one of the bhikshu's precept transmitting masters or any one of the other bhikshus practicing with him is not pure, then the Bodhimanda as described will not be successful. Ananda, you should know that if the bhikshu who is cultivating and upholding this method with the Shurangama Mantra had even one precept-transmitting master who was not pure, or if he is cultivating this practice with another bhikshu who is not pure, then the method will not be successful. It won't work if any one of these people is impure, that is, if they don't hold the precepts purely. Perhaps they hold the precepts and yet violate them. One is not supposed to kill, but they have killed; or one is not supposed to steal, but they have stolen; one is not supposed to commit acts of deviant sexual conduct and they have done so; or one is not supposed to lie, but they have lied. The Buddha taught us not to lie, but they dispense with the "not" and just hold to the "lie." If that is how it is, the Bodhimanda will not be successful.

All the work of cultivating, all the mantras you held, will still not bring you success. Therefore, if you practice this dharma and do not get a response from your cultivation, you cannot say, "I cultivated for three weeks, but Shakyamuni Buddha and the Buddhas of the ten directions did not come and rub me on the crown of the head. I didn't even see them. Probably Shakyamuni Buddha was also lying." That is not the case. Perhaps you yourself are not pure, or the teachers from whom you received the precepts were not pure, or any one of the ten people you are practicing this dharma with may not be pure. If there is even one impure person involved, this state will not be accomplished. This is extremely important.
 **Sutra:

After three weeks, one sits upright and still for a hundred days. Those with sharp faculties will not arise from their seats and will become Shrotaapannas. Although their bodies and minds have not attained the ultimate fruition of sagehood, they know for certain, beyond exaggeration, that they will eventually accomplish Buddhahood.

Commentary:**

After three weeks, one sits upright and still for a hundred days. One sits in meditation, but not like some people who sit still for two hours and consider it a superb feat. They consider themselves to be outstanding people, but actually, if we compare that to what is described here, it's like a kitten encountering a lion. "Upright" means that one does not lean to the left or right, or lean forward or back, or get up or stretch out one's legs. It's not sitting there and thinking, "Ah my legs really hurt!" Sitting "still" means that nothing troubles one. Sitting for a hundred days means one does not go eat or even get up to relieve oneself. One simply sits for one hundred days. Those with sharp faculties will not arise from their seats and will become Shrotaapannas. People who are intelligent and have good roots can then sit for one hundred days and be certified to the first stage of arhatship. But now you can't even sit still for one whole day, and yet there are some who think they have reached the fruition of a sage. That's really ridiculous. You have to be able to sit for a hundred days to accomplish firststage arhatship. Although their bodies and minds have not attained the ultimate fruition of sagehood, they know for certain, beyond exaggeration, that they will eventually accomplish Buddhahood. They still have not attained genuine samadhi-power in their cultivation, but they know for a fact that they will certainly become Buddhas. It is definitely not a false notion.

K3 Concludes answer to question.
 **Sutra:

You have asked how the Bodhimanda is established. This is the way it is done.

Commentary:**

This is how you set it up.